SPRING 2022 : VOLUME 3 : ISSUE 1

Ṣirāṭ Link

A path for connecting with Allah, others, and one's self

SOLITUDE

Hope in Separation • To My Imām (ʿaj) • The Strength of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa)

Letter from MOULANA ABIDI

Salāmun ʿalaykum,

May Allah bless us, our families, and our communities. My best wishes and congratulations to the Imām of our time, Imām al-Mahdī (ʿaj), our great marāji‘ and scholars, and to the Muslim ummah on the beginning of the spiritual season, the blessed months of Rajab, Shaʿbān, and Ramaḍān.

Although all the months, places, and people are the creations of Allah, some people reach the highest status of piety because of their sincerity. Allah makes them as a guide and light for others. Allah has also made some places special because of the sincere actions that were done there, such as Mecca, Medina, Najaf, Karbala, etc. These places became icons and are subject to continuous blessings of Allah.

In the same way, certain times of the year, like the month of Ramaḍān, are very blessed. The month of Rajab and

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Ṣirāṭ Link
A 2nd Chance Books Publication

وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا

For the love of Him, they feed the needy, the orphan, and the prisoner.

(Noble Qurʾān 76:8)

2nd Chance Books is a non-profit organization that was founded in order to assist incarcerated Muslims by providing them with educational materials, tools for rehabilitation, and a support system. By responding to their numerous questions about Islam, they gain a more thorough understanding of the religion. So far, 2nd Chance has distributed over 20,000 books to inmates across the country.

Among 2nd Chance's most recent initiatives is Ṣirāṭ Link, a quarterly magazine. The title Ṣirāṭ Link, inspired by the Arabic term Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm which means the right path, presents this magazine as a means of guidance to a better connection to Allah, as well as offering the opportunity for connections with the broader community, and the improvement of one's self. InshāʾAllāh it can also serve as an opportunity for growing one's faith through education.

This magazine will be under the guidance and oversight of Moulana Nabi Raza Mir Abidi, Resident ʿĀlim of SABA Center, and several other scholars and experts.

following months, Shaʿbān and Ramaḍān, is a special season of mercy and blessings of Allah in which we can optimize our potentials to reach to the best results and outcomes. The month of Rajab is the time for planting the seed of ikhlāṣ (sincerity) and taking initiatives, so that we can cultivate the results in the nights of Qadr.

The months of Rajab and Shaʿbān are also special because in these two months, we celebrate the wilādahs of so many Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). In Rajab, we celebrate the birthdays of Imām al-Bāqir (ʿa), Sayyidah Sakīnah (ʿa), Imām at-Taqī (ʿa), and Imām ʿAlī (ʿa). In addition to these, Rajab is the month in which the first revelation of the Qurʾān took place, the occasion of the Biʿthat of the Prophet (ṣ), and the ascension of the Prophet (ṣ) to the heavens. In Shaʿbān, we celebrate the birthdays of Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa), Ḥaḍrat ʿAbbās (ʿa), Imām Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa), Ḥaḍrat ʿAlī al-Akbar, and the Imām of our time, Imām al-Mahdī (ʿaj). Many scholars also say that the other divine books were revealed in these two months, and the other prophets were appointed in them as well. These two months are a preamble to the month of Ramaḍān, a time for us to prepare our souls for the spiritual benefits of that month.

We pray that Allah gives us the tawfīq to actualize our duties and responsibilities.

Jazākallāh Khayr and Best Wishes,

Nabi R. Mir (Abidi)

Resident ʿĀlim of SABA Islamic Center

SIGNIFICANT DAYS OF SHAHR RAJAB

1st	Birth Anniversary of Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir (ʿa)	*February 3rd, 2022
3rd	Death Anniversary of Imām ʿAlī al-Hādī an-Naqī (ʿa)	*February 5th, 2022
10th	Birth Anniversary of Imām Muḥammad at-Taqī al-Jawād (ʿa)	*February 12th, 2022
13th	Birth Anniversary of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa)	*February 15th, 2022
25th	Death Anniversary of Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim (ʿa)	*February 27th, 2022
26th	Aʿmāl of Night of Miʿrāj & Mabʿath	*February 28th, 2022
27th	Eid al-Mabʿath and Miʿrāj	*March 1st, 2022
28th	Imām Ḥusayn (ʿa) begins journey to Karbala	*March 2nd, 2022

SIGNIFICANT DAYS OF SHAHR SHAʿBĀN

3rd	Birth Anniversary of Imām Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (ʿa)	*March 6th, 2022
4th	Birth Anniversary of Ḥaḍrat ʿAbbās ibn ʿAlī (ʿa)	*March 7th, 2022
5th	Birth Anniversary of Imām Zayn ul-ʿĀbidīn (ʿa)	*March 8th, 2022
15th	Birth Anniversary of Imām al-Mahdī (ʿaj)	*March 18th, 2022

SIGNIFICANT DAYS OF SHAHR RAMAḌĀN

1st	Beginning of Fasting	*April 3rd, 2022
10th	Death Anniversary of Ḥaḍrat Khadījah al-Kubrā (ʿa)	*April 12th, 2022
15th	Birth Anniversary of Imām Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī (ʿa)	*April 17th, 2022
18th	First night of 19th Laylat ul-Qadr	*April 20th, 2022
20th	Night of 21st Laylat ul-Qadr	*April 22nd, 2022
21st	Death Anniversary of Imām ʿAlī ibn Abū Ṭālib (ʿa)	*April 22nd, 2022
22nd	Night of 23rd Laylat ul-Qadr	*April 24th, 2022

SIGNIFICANT DAYS OF SHAHR SHAWWĀL

1st	Eid ul-Fiṭr	*May 2nd, 2022

*Please note the above Gregorian dates are only estimates. The dates are subject to change based on moon sighting, upon which the Islamic calendar is based.

HOPE IN

By Sayyid Ali Musawi, contributing scholar

Although the world we live in has a great deal of advanced technology, we see some people still feeling lonelier than ever. In spite of living in crowded cities, we walk like strangers through the streets. Loneliness is one of the biggest issues that modern people face.

But when we go back in time, we find that the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and their followers also felt a great deal of loneliness. They lived in a society which not only rejected them, but persecuted them as well. When the Prophet (ṣ) first began to teach people about Islam, they slandered him, socially isolated him, and even physically attacked him. During this time, the Prophet (ṣ) felt a heavy sense of loneliness from the people of his society. Although he brought them the greatest religion and the best way of life, the people violently rejected him for many long years.

In this same way, the Imāms (ʿa) also experienced extensive loneliness. Whenever they tried to teach the pure Islam they had learned from their grandfather, the Messenger of Allah, Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), they were slandered, isolated, imprisoned, and ultimately murdered. Their followers also experienced the same things.

The truth is that being a Shīʿah is not easy. It is a path of sacrifice and a path that can be lonely at times. If this is the case, then how did the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and their followers succeed in spreading Islam? In spite of all the pressures, the faith grew year by year until it reached every single corner of the globe. Today you find Shīʿah in every country that exists. What is the secret behind this?

The Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and their followers did many things and there are three in particular that helped them through these tough times.

The first was that they worked hard to maintain a deep connection with Allah. Whenever they felt lonely and the walls were closing in, they called upon Allah, the One who had created them and the One who was watching over them. Whenever they would call upon Allah, their loneliness would go away and they would feel a sense of peace and calm.

The second thing which they did was maintain a strong connection with their Imām (ʿa). They would try to visit him as much as possible. When they were away from him, they would practice what he had taught them, until the next visit, when he would teach them more. This connection with the Imām (ʿa) made them feel less lonely because they felt the Imām's (ʿa) presence in their day to day lives.

The third thing which they did was to keep strong ties with fellow believers. They would visit each other constantly. Even if they lived far away, they would make an effort to visit and spend time with one another. This helped them to feel less lonely, even when the society was going in a different direction.

As followers of the Maʿṣūmīn (Infallibles) (ʿa) in the modern day world, we should try to follow these three prescriptions. We can work harder at connecting with Allah, the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), and with one another. Doing these three will help us to continue standing firm in the path of Allah.

Some people might say that the Shīʿah in the past could visit their Imām (ʿa) and have a strong connection with him, but we can't do that, because our Imām Mahdī (ʿaj) is not with us. But the truth is that our Imām (ʿaj) is with us and Allah allows him to see the things that we are doing. When we speak to him, Allah allows him to hear our words. So we should always try to remember this and maintain a connection with our Imām (ʿaj).

SEPARATION

Whenever you feel lonely, speak to him (ʿaj), he will hear what you are saying. Ask him (ʿaj) to pray for you, for your guidance and the problems that you face. The supplication of our Imām (ʿaj) is powerful, but just as powerful as his supplications will be your connection to him (ʿa).

May Allah make us stand firm on His path and give us the ability to have a strong connection with our Imām (ʿaj), inshāʾAllāh (God-willing).

Additionally, there are a few more practical ways to strengthen and maintain a connection to our Imām (ʿaj):

- **Supplicate for our Imām (ʿaj). Duʿā Al-Faraj is a supplication for the continued protection of the Imām (ʿaj), may Allah hasten his reappearance.**
- **Write a letter to Imām Mahdī (ʿaj) and share some of your hopes and dreams with him.**
- **Fulfill our religious responsibilities through what Allah has asked of us.**
- **Purify our hearts through repentance.**
- **Increase our religious knowledge through the study of Islam from those who know, through books, lectures, and other educational materials.**

EARNING A SPECIAL POSITION

Question: According to the Noble Qurʾān, what special characteristics will the chosen followers of Imām Mahdī (ʿaj) possess?

Answer: A great and universal movement is in need of capable, experienced, and upright leaders who have the ability to garner followers, help fulfill the goals of the mission, establish a new system and ultimately help bring about the success of that movement. The mission of Imām Mahdī (ʿaj) goes beyond nationality, tribe, race, creed, time limitations, and so forth. Imām's (ʿaj) uprising (movement) will be so wide spread that it will encompass all nations and all groups of people from the past, present, and future. Even the angels of heaven will take part in Imām Mahdī's (ʿaj) uprising.

The Qualities of Imām Mahdī's (ʿaj) Followers According to the Noble Qurʾān:

There are āyahs in the Noble Qurʾān that specifically mention the qualities of the helpers of Imām Mahdī (ʿaj). There are also narrations that explicitly allude to the fact that certain āyahs are about Imām Mahdī (ʿaj) and his companions. The following is one of these āyahs:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَن يَرْتَدَّ مِنكُمْ عَن دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّـهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّـهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّـهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّـهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

O you who have faith! Should any of you desert his religion, Allah will soon bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, [who will be] humble toward the faithful, stern toward the faithless, strive hard in the way of Allah, not fearing the blame of any blamer. That is Allah's grace, which He grants to whomever He wishes, and Allah is All-Bounteous, All-Knowing.[1]

1 Noble Qurʾān, 5:54.

Based on this āyah, in the future, Allah will bring forth a group of people who will support the doctrines of religion and His commands. The qualities of the individuals who will be responsible for carrying out this great mission have been mentioned in the Noble Qurʾān:

They love Allah and only seek His pleasure. Allah loves them and they love Him in return:

يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ

They will be humble toward the faithful:

أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

They will stand strong against the faithless:

أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ

They will always strive hard in the way of Allah:

يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّـهِ

They stand firm and do not fear the blame of any critic:

وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ

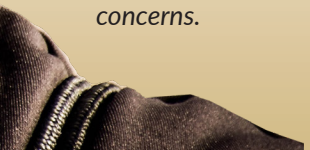
At the end of the āyah we are told that achievement of these noble qualities are through the grace of Allah, as well as through personal effort. We are also reminded that He bestows His favors on whomever he wishes:

ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّـهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّـهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

That is Allah's grace, which He grants to whomever He wishes, and Allah is All-Bounteous, All-Knowing.

The qualities mentioned in the verse above are attainable by any believer through effort and in his or her quest to tread on the right path. They are in fact the motto by which we should conduct ourselves and live our lives. Thereby, strengthening our faith, while preparing to stand with the Imām (ʿaj) of our time.

The "Tell Me About" series is a textual compilation of Islamic questions and answers that are commonly asked by university students and relate to many of the issues that we face in society today. They have been addressed by a prominent Islamic scholar to give a holistic and spiritual answer to their concerns.



Duʿā Al-Faraj

This is a supplication commonly recited for the safeguarding of Imām Mahdī (ʿaj).

اَللَّهُمَّ كُنْ لِوَلِيِّكَ الْحُجَّةِ بْنِ الْحَسَنِ

Allāhumma kun-liwalīyyikal-Ḥujjat ibn al-Ḥasan

O Allah, [we ask You to] be for Your close guardian (walī), al-Ḥujjah, the son of Ḥasan,

صَلَواتُكَ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلى آبائِه

Ṣalawātuka ʿalayhi wa ʿalā ābāʾih

blessings of Allah be upon him and his fathers,

فِي هٰذِهِ السّاعَةِ وَفِي كُلِّ ساعَةٍ

Fī hādhihis-sāʿah wa fī kulli sāʿah

now and always,

وَلِيّاً وَحافِظاً وَقائِداً وَناصِراً وَدَلِيلاً وَعَيْناً

Walīyyan-wa ḥāfiẓā wa qāʾidan-wa nāṣirā wa dalīlan-wa ʿaynā

[Be for him] a guardian, a protector, a leader, a helper, a proof, and an eye.

حَتَّى تُسْكِنَهُ أَرْضَكَ طَوْعاً

Ḥattā tuskinahu arḍaka ṭawʿā

until You establish him as the leader on Your earth,

وَتُمَتِّعَهُ فِيْها طَوِيلا

wa tumattiʿahu fīhā ṭawīlā

followed by all and for a long lifetime to prosper

To My Imām (aj)

O' Imām of the time,[1] I send my greetings of peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah to you. I know that in the Noble Qur'ān it states that the reply to the greeting is obligatory. I trust with full certainty that you hear my greetings, by the permission of Allah, and that you will respond to it. Just knowing that you will send your greetings to me gives me so much comfort in these dark times.

I feel isolated living in a place where few are enlightened to the path of truth. It breaks my heart to think of the isolation you must feel, knowing that Allah has lengthened your life span and that you are His last remnant on Earth,[2] How painful it must be for you to see the state of the world and especially the plight of the Muslims nowadays.

I've learned that one of the many ways of building a connection with you is through writing, so I find myself here sharing my innermost thoughts and struggles with you. In a world where I feel I can trust very few, I have faith in the fact that you are my trustworthy guide that Allah has appointed as the 12th successor of the Noble Prophet (ṣ). Many people without faith don't know what to do when they face problems, so they turn to drugs and alcohol, but I know the best resort is to turn to you as my trustworthy confidant.

I know that, even though I claim to be your follower, I fall short of my duties. I feel ashamed of the things I've done, either openly or secretly, and I feel that when the angels bring you my deeds that you may say those dreaded words: He is not from amongst my followers. I sincerely ask that you have patience with me and that you take me by my hand as one would do with a young child, who does not know any better, and guide my hand toward the path of Allah's pleasure. All I want is to be a good servant of your's, O' Imām, because in following your way I am following the way of your grandfather the Noble Prophet (ṣ). What benefit is life if I am not amongst those who are attached to the two weighty things the Prophet (ṣ) left for us: the Noble Qurʾān and his Household (ʿa)?

With the little knowledge I have, it pains me to see the condition of society. So, I can't imagine how it must hurt you to see people deep in the sea of ignorance. I see people at each other's throats over things such as race, religion, and political stances. It is very clear to me that Islam has all the solutions to mankind's problems, but we see that so many are averse to the religion due to false propaganda. I lie in bed and my chest feels tight thinking of these things.

How can I hate another person when Allah teaches us: "O' mankind! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you..."[3] It hurts my soul to see that we live in a society where a race of people has to make a stand in order to say that their lives matter. I see the difference of how one race gets treated versus another. The injustice is clear, but very few care for justice anymore. I know that you, O' Mahdī, have been foretold by our Prophet (ṣ) to bring justice to the Earth after it has been filled with injustice. I am anxiously awaiting the day when people will be treated fairly and have peace and security.

Why should I treat another person badly because they have a different belief system than me, when I see that your great grandfather Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) taught me: "People are of two types: Either they are your brother in religion or your equal in humanity."[4] And Allah has instructed me to deal kindly and justly with all people: "Allah does not forbid you from dealing with kindness and justice with those who did not make war against you on account of religion and did not expel you from your homes. Indeed, Allah loves the just."[5] I imagine to myself how much better the world would be if society would only act on these teachings Islam has given to us.

I see people insulting and fighting each other over differences in the political rulings of men, whereas they neglect the rulings and teachings of their Creator. They look to fallible people to guide them, yet totally overlook the book of guidance along with its infallible guides that were sent to them. If they only looked towards the Noble Qurʾān, the divinely chosen representatives of Allah[6] and those scholars who are experts in their[7] ways, then society would have clear guidance on how to live their lives: "By your Lord, they will not be true believers until they let you[8] decide between them in all matters of dispute and find no resistance in their souls to your decisions, accepting them totally."[9]

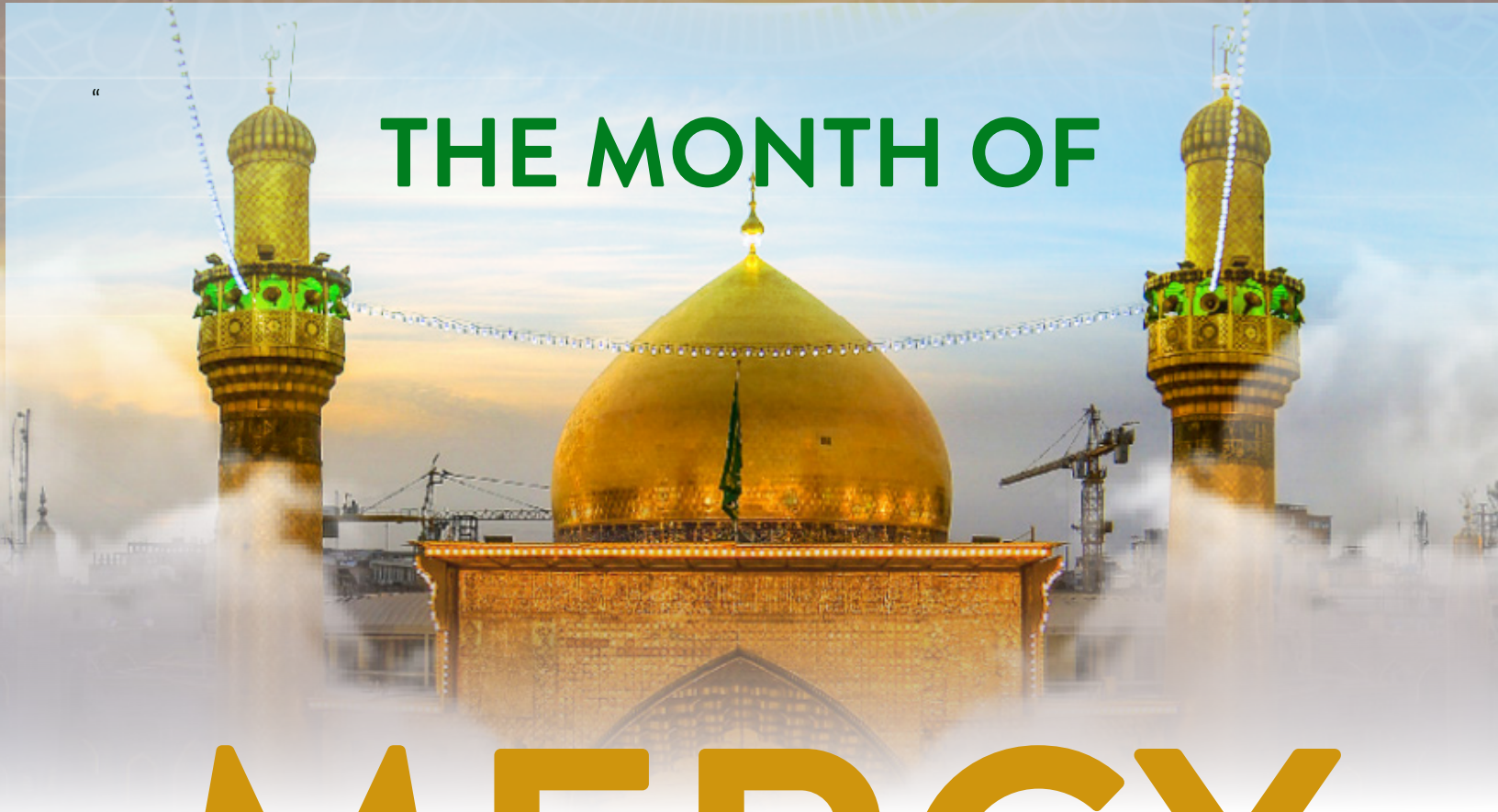
Society has sunk deep into corruption and immorality. Toxic hatred is spewed by people, either in person or online, and it seems that humanity is no longer present, rather they are demons in human form. How have we sunk so low? We must return to Allah's way and back to you, O' Imām, if we hope to fix our problems.

I know that the ultimate solution to the world's problems is the return of your presence to our society. I therefore pray reciting those supplications taught to us such as Duʿā al-Faraj, Duʿā al-ʿAhd and Duʿā an-Nudbah, asking Allah to alleviate our suffering and to fix our broken world by hastening your reappearance. I pray that someone unworthy, such as myself, may have the blessed opportunity to glance at your face and be your humble servant in your mission to call mankind back toward Allah, eradicate injustice and restore the rights of the oppressed.

Sincerely,

Shaykh Mateen Charbonneau
contributing scholar

1 Ṣāḥib az-Zamān (ʿaj)
2 Baqiyyatullāh (ʿaj)
3 Noble Qurʾān, 49:13
4 Nahj al-Balāghah, Letter #53
5 Noble Qurʾān, 60:8
6 The 14 Infallibles (Maʿṣūmīn) (ʿa)
7 The ways of Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa)
8 Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ)
9 Noble Qurʾān, 4:65



THE MONTH OF MERCY

The following is a compilation of excerpts of Prophet Muḥammad's (ṣ) sermon in welcoming the month of Ramaḍān:

"O people, indeed the month of Allah has approached you with blessings, mercy and forgiveness. In the eyes of Allah, it is the best of all months, its days are the best of all days, its nights are the best of all nights, and its hours are the best of all hours. It is a month in which you have been invited to be the honored guests of Allah. Your breathing in the month is tasbīḥ (reciting the praise of Allah), your sleep in it is an act of ʿibādah (worship), your deeds are accepted, and your prayers are answered. Therefore, ask your Lord with sincere intentions and pure hearts to help you fast during this month and recite His book, for the most unfortunate is one who is deprived of Allah's forgiveness in this great month.

By your thirst and hunger, remember the hunger of the Day of Judgment and its thirst. Give charity to the poor and needy among you, lower your glances from what is not permissible for you to see, and refrain [from hearing] what is not permissible for you to hear. Show sympathy to the orphans of the people, and sympathy will be shown to your orphans. Repent for your sins, and raise your hands in supplications at the time of your prayers, for that is the best of times in which Allah looks toward His servants with mercy. He grants them what they whisper to Him, responds to them when they call upon Him, gives them when they ask Him, and accepts their prayers when they pray to Him.

O people, your souls are dependent on your deeds; therefore, release them [from the Hellfire] by asking for forgiveness. Your backs are burdened with the weight [of sins], so lighten their burden by lengthening your sujūd (prostrations), and He shall not threaten with fire when people will stand [in prayers] for the Lord of the universe.

O people, whosoever among you improves his khūlq (character) during this month shall pass over the ṣirāṭ (the

bridge) on the Day of Judgment when otherwise their feet would slip.

O people, the doors of Paradise are open during this month, so ask your Lord not to close them on you; the doors of Hell are closed, so ask your Lord not to open them up for you. The satans are in chains, so ask Allah not to impose them upon you."

Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) stood up and said, "O Messenger of Allah, what is the best of deeds during this month?"

The Prophet (ṣ) said, "O Abāl Ḥasan! The best of deeds during this month is to refrain from what Allah has prohibited."

Then, the Prophet (ṣ) began to weep. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) asked, "O Messenger of Allah, what has made you cry?"

The Prophet (ṣ) said, "O ʿAlī, I am crying for the injustice that will be done against you this month. It is as if I see you while you are praying to your Lord, and the most wretched of the mankind...struck you [with his sword] on your head so that its blood colored your beard."

Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) asked, "O Messenger of Allah, will this happen while I am at peace with my faith?"

The Prophet (ṣ) replied, "You will be at peace with your faith. O ʿAlī, whoever kills you, it is as if he has killed me; whoever hates you, it is as if he hates me; whoever curses you, it is as if he has cursed me because you are to me like my own soul. Your soul is from my soul, and your nature is from my nature. Verily, All-Mighty Allah created me and you, then He selected me and you, and chose me for Prophethood and chose you for Imāmah; so, whoever rejects your Imāmah has indeed rejected my Prophethood. O ʿAlī, you are my heir, the father of my descendants, the husband of my daughter, and the successor of my community in my life as well as in my death. Your command is my command, and your prohibition is my prohibition. I swear by the One who raised me as the Prophet (ṣ) and made me the best of creation, you indeed are the proof of Allah upon His creation, the trustee of His secret, and His vicegerent toward His servants."

(Translated by Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, ʿUyūn Akhbār ar-Riḍā (ʿa), Vol. 2, P. 265 by Shaykh Saduq)

Daily Duʿā for Ramaḍān

By Imām at-Taqī (ʿa)

بِسْمِ اللَّـهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm

I begin, dedicate my action, and seek help with the name of Allah, the All-Kind (general mercy), the All-Merciful (mercy for the believers)

يَا ذَا الَّذِي كَانَ قَبْلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ،

Yā dhal-ladhī kāna qabla kulli shay'

O He who has always been there before all things,

ثُمّ خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ، يَا ذَا الَّذِي لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ،

Thumma khalaqa kulla shay', Yā dhal-ladhī laysa ka-mithlihi shay'

Then He created everything, O' the One who nothing is like Him

وَيَا ذَا الَّذِي لَيْسَ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ العُلَى،

Wa yā dhal-ladhī laysa fis-samāwātil-ʿulā,

O He who is neither in the highest Heavens,

وَلا فِي الأَرَضِينَ السُّفْلَى،

Wa lā fil-araḍīnas-suflā,

Nor in the lowest layers of the earth,

وَلا فَوْقَهُنّ وَلا تَحْتَهُنّ وَلا بَيْنَهُنّ إِلٰهٌ يُعْبَدُ غَيْرُهُ،

Wa lā fawqa-hunna wa lā taḥta-hunna wa lā bayna-hunna ilāhun yu'badu ghayruh,

Nor above them, nor beneath them, nor there is between them any god that is worshipped except Him.

لَكَ الْحَمْدُ حَمْداً لا يقْوَى عَلَى إِحْصَائِهِ إِلاَّ أَنْتَ،

Lakal-ḥamdu ḥamdan la yaqwā ʿalā iḥṣā'ihi illa ant,

O' to You be the praise that none can count except You,

فَصَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمّدٍ صَلاةً لا يَقْوَى عَلَى إِحْصَائِهَا إِلاَّ أَنْتَ.

Faṣalli ʿalā Muḥammadin wa āli Muḥammad; ṣalātan la yaqwā ʿalā iḥṣā'ihā illa ant.

So, please bless Muḥammad (ṣ) and the household of Muḥammad (ṣ) with the blessings that none can count except You.

The Spiritual Strength Of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa)

By Sayyid Muzzamil Zaidi, contributing scholar

When a person is devoted to another, they quickly learn about the beloved's characteristics and at times, strive to imitate them. The priorities and objectives (aspirations) of the beloved are important to that individual. This is one of the main reasons why Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) never made any compromises when it came to Islamic principles. Living according to Allah's commands exemplified his love of the Creator. His embodiment of Allah's attributes captivated and attracted those who naturally possessed a pure and spiritual soul.

Many times we are tested with the blessings that we have. The status of a person is measured by the way he utilizes the blessings that are at his disposal and the choices that he makes when he is tested. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa), the son of Prophet Muḥammad's (ṣ) uncle, Abū Ṭālib (ʿa), embodied how to use blessings for the pleasure of Allah. There is much to glean from this. We will look at how he (ʿa) did this so that we may practically benefit from this in our lives.

Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was the first person who gave allegiance to the Prophet (ṣ) after he announced his prophethood, and stayed with him like his shadow till the time the Prophet (ṣ) departed from this mortal world. Imām's support of the mission did not end with the Prophet's death but he fulfilled the promise of taking the message forward till his last breath.

During the life of the Prophet (ṣ), Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) was involved in many battles and his prowess on the battlefield is well recorded in history, that is, his (ʿa) valor and courage won many battles for Islam. In this case, he (ʿa) used the blessings of his strength in a pure and sincere manner–purely for the sake of Allah. He (ʿa) would always give options to the enemies to retreat or to accept Islam before going to war with them. Negotiations during war are often done by those who have the lesser hand in the deal and have something to lose; hence they resort to negotiations. It is very rare to see someone who has more strength and knows that they can overcome their rival, not to use that strength. The famous incident of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) in the Battle of Khaybar shows how he knew exactly when to use his sword and when to hold back his strength, as he was challenged to fight by the strongest man of the time, ʿAmr ibn ʿAbdu Wudd. When the two warriors came face to face, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) in a swift motion had him on the floor and was about to kill him, but ʿAmr in his last moment spat at Imām ʿAlī (ʿa). Consider yourself in that position - there you are in the midst of the dust of a ferocious war and you have just grounded their strongest soldier, and at that moment, this person spits in your face. What would you do in such circumstances? What does Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) do? Right away he gets up, takes a few steps away, and then comes back to finish the duel. When he (ʿa) was asked what the reason was that caused him to step away, he responded by saying that he didn't want to let his personal emotions affect his decision, changing the intention from a pure one to a selfish and egotistical one after being spat in the face. He (ʿa) came back to finish the fight with a pure intention, renewed only for the sake of Islam. This is how one correctly uses their blessings.

The little mankind has been able to understand about the great virtues of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) is enough for a person to conclude he only used everything that he had for the sake of Allah. After the death of the Prophet (ṣ), he was put in a position where no man would want to display patience while having the strength to fight; but at that time, his (ʿa) responsibility to the religion and ultimately Allah, was patience. Those who were after worldly gains wanted to usurp the divine rights given to Imām ʿAlī (ʿa). They barged into his house and attacked his noble wife, Sayyidah Fāṭimah az-Zahrāʾ (ʿa). A man with dignity would rather be dead than to see his wife (ʿa) –his beloved– attacked by anyone. Further, he (ʿa) was known to be the strongest man of his time, and despite knowing his own potential against any opponents, he made the wise choice to avoid any physical confrontation. If Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) did pursue a confrontation, this would undoubtedly result in undermining Islam for which the Prophet (ṣ) just shortly before had worked so hard to establish. The religion needed more of him than to fight. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) yet again used his strength of patience and contained his physical strength for the sake of Allah. This is what is called courage. Courage is a phenomenon that contains two important components: one is to fight your fears, and the other is to conceal your strength when Allah requires that from you. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) witnessed how his right to lead the Muslim nation was usurped and how his family was treated, but he stayed patient despite being in the prime of his youth. Even toward the end of his (ʿa) life, he (ʿa) displayed his strength in the battles fought against the hypocrites and was victorious in those battles. It was better for peace and unity to prevail during that fragile period after the death of the Prophet (ṣ), hence Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) held back his physical strength when his house was attacked and his beloved wife (ʿa) was physically assaulted.

We are constantly making choices in our lives in regards to all the blessings we have, whether these choices pertain to our time, health, and so forth. Do we spend our time in a way that Allah would be pleased with? Do we use our health, strength, and energy toward actions and deeds that are pure? Reflecting upon these questions will help us to apply what we have seen Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) practice. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) truly lived as if Allah was watching every moment of his life. If we start to believe in the concept that our choices are being witnessed by Allah, we would definitely be motivated to make the right choices and be able to win the pleasure of Allah just like Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) did throughout his life.

Duʿā For Forgiveness

It is narrated that the Noble Prophet (ṣ) said that the one who says the following supplication after each obligatory prayer in Ramaḍān will have all his sins forgiven up to the Resurrection Day:

بِسْمِ اللَّـهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm

I begin, dedicate my action, and seek help with the name of Allah, the All-Kind (general mercy), the All-Merciful (mercy for the believers),

اَللَّهُمَّ أَدْخِلْ عَلَى أَهْلِ الْقُبُورِ السُّرُورَ،

Allāhumma adkhil ʿalā ahlil-qubūris-surūr,

O Allah, instill happiness in the spirits of the inhabitants of the grave,

اَللَّهُمَّ أَغْنِ كُلَّ فَقِيرٍ،

Allāhumma aghni kulla faqīr,

O Allah, enrich every indigent (poor one),

اَللَّهُمَّ أَشْبِعْ كُلَّ جَائِعٍ،

Allāhumma ashbiʿ kulla jāʾiʿ,

O Allah, satisfy every hungry person,

اَللَّهُمَّ اكْسُ كُلَّ عُرْيَانٍ،

Allāhummak-su kulla ʿuryān,

O Allah, clothe every unclothed one,

اَللَّهُمَّ اقْضِ دَيْنَ كُلِّ مَدِينٍ،

Allāhummaq-ḍi dayna kulli madīn,

O Allah, facilitate the payment of every indebted one,

Duʿā continued

Night of Destiny

The nights of Qadr are forthcoming. In the Islamic tradition, they are nights of extreme importance in which the affairs of the believers are determined for the next year. One has the potential during these nights to alter their destiny, hence the name, 'Night of Destiny'. The special night could fall on the 19th, 21st, or 23rd of Ramaḍān, so one must strive to make the most of each night. There are common actions (aʿmāl) that one can do during these blessed nights to maximize one's benefit which are listed below.

Write the wishes you would like to ask from Allah on the night all wishes are answered. Include a prayer to hasten the return of our Awaited Savior, Imām al-Mahdī (ʿaj).

Common Aʿmāl

GHUSL

STAY AWAKE
According to Shaykh Ṭūsī, gaining knowledge is one of the most recommended acts.

ṢADAQAH

MUSTAḤAB TWO RĀKAʿĀT ṢALĀH
In each rakaʿāh Sūrah al-Fātiḥah once, then Sūrah Ikhlāṣ seven times.

ASK FORGIVENESS
"Astaghfirullāha Rabbī wa atūbuilayh" a hundred times and Duʿā Kumayl once

NOBLE **QUR'ĀN**
Recite the verses of the Noble Qurʾān

ZIYĀRAH OF IMĀM ḤUSAYN (ʿA)

PRAY FOR OTHERS

SELF REFLECTION

100 RAKAʿĀT ṢALĀH
Many people read their outstanding prayers and include them in the 100 rakaʿāt ṣalāh read in sets of two rakaʿāt, getting reward for both actions.

Duʿā continued

اَللَّهُمَّ فَرِّجْ عَنْ كُلِّ مَكْرُوبٍ،
Allāhumma farrij ʿan kulli makrūb,
O Allah, relieve every deeply anguished one,

اَللَّهُمَّ رُدَّ كُلَّ غَرِيبٍ،
Allāhumma rudda kulla gharīb,
O Allah, return every wanderer (home),

اَللَّهُمَّ فُكَّ كُلَّ أَسِيرٍ،
Allāhumma fukka kulla asīr,
O Allah, free every captive,

اَللَّهُمَّ أَصْلِحْ كُلَّ فَاسِدٍ مِنْ أُمُورِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ،
Allāhumma aṣliḥ kulla fāsidin min umūril-muslimīn,
O Allah, reform every corrupt affair of the Muslims,

اَللَّهُمَّ اشْفِ كُلَّ مَرِيضٍ،
Allāhummash-fi kulla marīḍ,
O Allah, cure every sick person,

اَللَّهُمَّ سُدَّ فَقْرَنَا بِغِنَاكَ،
Allāhumma sudda faqranā bi-ghināk,
O Allah, fill our poverty with your needlessness,

اَللَّهُمَّ غَيِّرْ سُوءَ حَالِنَا بِحُسْنِ حَالِكَ،
Allāhumma ghayyir sūʾa ḥālinā bi-ḥusni ḥālik,
O Allah, change our unpleasant state into your beautiful state,

اَللَّهُمَّ اقْضِ عَنَّا الدَّيْنَ وَأَغْنِنَا مِنَ الْفَقْرِ،
Allāhummaq-ḍi ʿannad-dayna wa aghninā minal-faqr,
O Allah, facilitate the payment of our debt and make us needless,

إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.
Innaka ʿalā kulli shayʾin qadīr.
Surely, You are All-Powerful over everything.

Sudoku

EASY

	7			2			4	6
	6					8	9	
2			8			7	1	5
	8	4		9	7			
7	1						5	9
			1	3		4	8	
6	9	7			2			8
	5	8					6	
4	3			8			7	

MEDIUM

5		7	2				9	
		6		3		7		1
4							6	
1			4	9				7
			5		8			
8				2	7			5
	7							9
2		9		8		6		
	4				9	3		8

HARD

		6	5					8
	9	5					2	
7			9			3		
				4		2	7	
			8	7	3			
	7	9		5				
		2			8			9
	5					8	1	
3					5	4		

ABOUT THE GAME

Sudoku is a popular Japanese puzzle game based on the logical placement of numbers. It doesn't require any calculation nor special math skills; all that is needed are brains and concentration. Sudoku, if played frequently, can make improvements in concentration and overall brain power.

HOW TO PLAY SUDOKU

The goal of Sudoku is to fill in a 9×9 grid with digits so that each column, row, and 3×3 section contains the numbers between 1 to 9. At the beginning of the game, the 9×9 grid will have some of the squares filled in. Your job is to use logic to fill in the missing digits and complete the grid. Don't forget, a move is incorrect if:

- Any row contains more than one of the same number from 1 to 9
- Any column contains more than one of the same number from 1 to 9
- Any 3×3 grid contains more than one of the same number from 1 to 9

TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

If you are a complete beginner, here are a few Sudoku tips that you can use to improve your Sudoku skills.

Tip 1: Look for rows, columns, and 3×3 sections that contain 5 or more numbers. Work through the remaining empty cells, trying the numbers that have not been used. In many cases, you will find numbers that can only be placed in one position considering the other numbers that are already in its row, column, and 3×3 grid.

Tip 2: Break the grid up visually into 3 columns and 3 rows. Each large column will have 3, 3×3 grids and each row will have 3, 3×3 grids. Now, look for columns or grids that have 2 of the same number. Logically, there must be a 3rd copy of the same number in the only remaining 9-cell section. Look at each of the remaining 9 positions and see if you can find the location of the missing number.

ANSWERS:

EASY

8	7	5	9	2	1	3	4	6
3	6	1	7	5	4	8	9	2
2	4	9	8	6	3	7	1	5
5	8	4	6	9	7	1	2	3
7	1	3	2	4	8	6	5	9
9	2	6	1	3	5	4	8	7
6	9	7	4	1	2	5	3	8
1	5	8	3	7	9	2	6	4
4	3	2	5	8	6	9	7	1

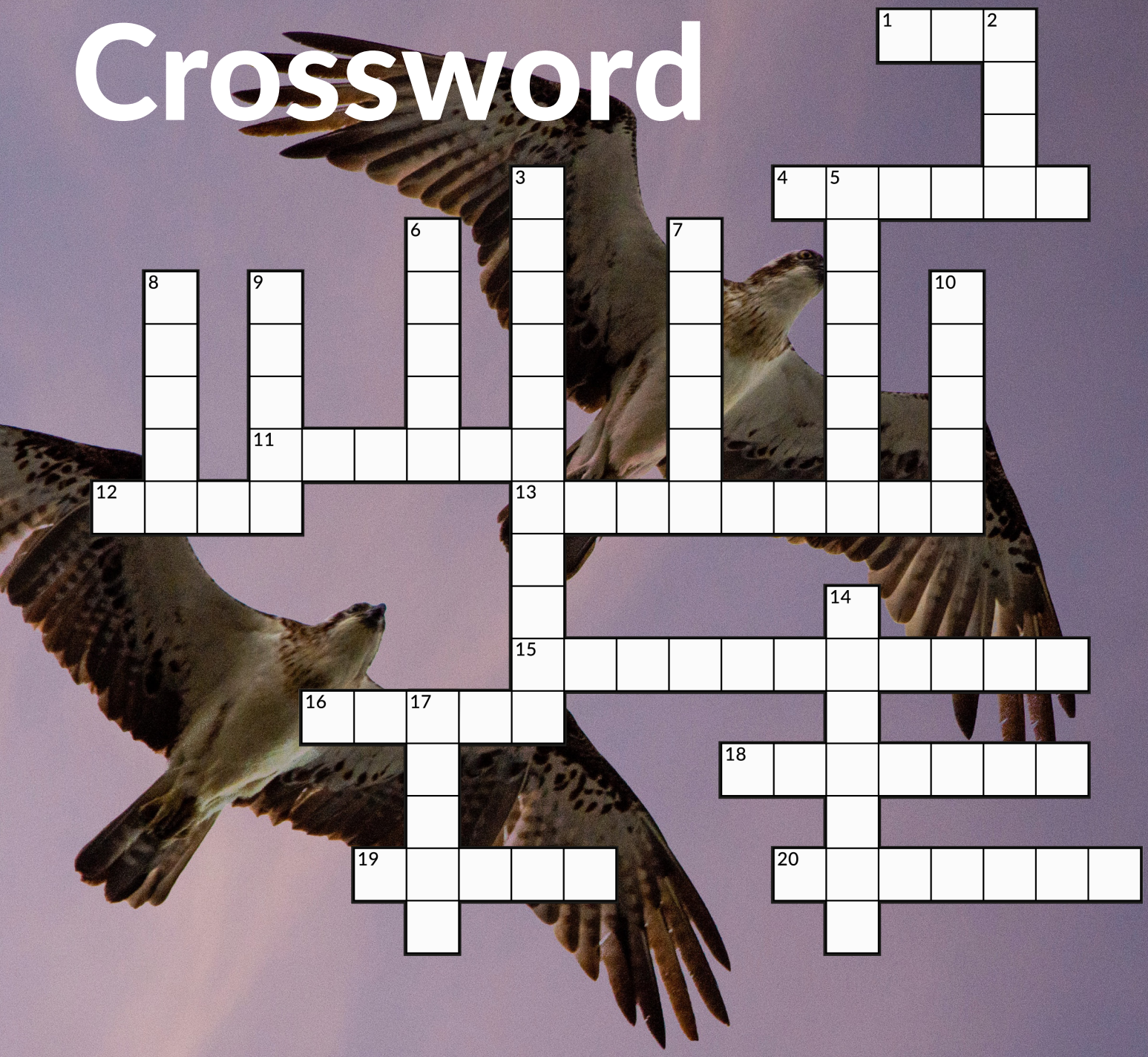
MEDIUM

5	1	7	2	6	4	8	9	3
9	2	6	8	3	5	7	4	1
4	8	3	9	7	1	5	6	2
1	3	5	4	9	6	2	8	7
7	9	2	5	1	8	4	3	6
8	6	4	3	2	7	9	1	5
3	7	8	6	4	2	1	5	9
2	5	9	1	8	3	6	7	4
6	4	1	7	5	9	3	2	8

HARD

1	3	6	5	2	4	7	9	8
8	9	5	3	6	7	1	2	4
7	2	4	9	8	1	3	5	6
5	8	3	6	4	9	2	7	1
2	6	1	8	7	3	9	4	5
4	7	9	1	5	2	6	8	3
6	9	7	4	1	8	5	3	9
9	5	7	4	3	6	8	1	2
3	1	8	2	9	5	4	6	7

Crossword



ACROSS:

1. Day of holy celebration

4. Sincerity in Arabic

11. A time when our Imām (ʿaj) is visible to us in Arabic

12. Our first Imām (ʿa)

13. The household of the Noble Prophet (ṣ)

15. The time our Imām (ʿaj) is hidden from us

16. Book of Allah's words

18. The month before the fasting month

19. Where our first Imām (ʿa) is buried

20. Wife of our first Imām (ʿa)

DOWN:

2. A call to Allah for help and assistance

3. Putting your head on earth

5. Where our third Imām (ʿa) is buried

6. The name of Allah's house

7. Where our Noble Prophet (ṣ) is buried

8. The location of Allah's house

9. Our present Imām (ʿaj)

10. Daily prayer to Allah

14. A month of fasting

17. The beginning of the holy months of Islam

Across: 1. Eid, 4. Ikhlāṣ, 11. Dhuhūr, 12. ʿAlī, 13. Ahl alBayt, 15. Occultation, 16. Qurʾān, 18. Shaʿbān, 19. Najaf, 20. Fāṭimah,
Down: 2. Duʿā, 3. Prostration, 5. Karbala, 6. Kabah, 7. Medina, 8. Mecca, 9. Mahdī, 10. Ṣalāt , 14. Ramaḍān, 17. Rajab

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Transliteration Guide

Arabic terms in this booklet have been transliterated according to the following guidelines:

ء	a, i, or u (initial form)
ء	’ (medial or final form)
ا	a
ب	b
ت	t
ث	th
ج	j
ح	ḥ
خ	j
د	d
ذ	dh
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	sh
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	‘
غ	gh
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
ه	h
و	w
ي	y
ة	h (without iḍāfah)
ة	t (with iḍāfah)
ـَـ	a
ـِـ	i
ـُـ	u

Glossary

Bismillāh: (I begin) in the name of God

Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm: (I begin) In the name of God, the All-Kind, the All-Merciful

Ḥadīth: A report or narration from the Prophet (ṣ) or Imāms (ʿa) that include sayings and actions.

Next Issue

The Worldly Life

A Father's Will

A Temporary Test

Light upon light!
Allah guides whoever He
wills to His light.
Noble Qurʾān, 24:35
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